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CHURCH OF GOD

A

CHURCH OF GOD

DESCRIBED;

THE

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

STATED;

AND

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP ILLUSTRATED;

IN TWO

DISCOURSES.

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THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF A *CHRISTIAN CHURCH.*

1 Corin. i. 2.

Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth; to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

THAT we may better understand the apostle's idea of a church of God, we must bear in mind that the Corinthians, before the gospel was preached among them, were *gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were led.* Those of them who received the doctrine preached by the apostles, renounced the idolatrous forms and places of worship, and united together to worship God through Jesus Christ, in the manner which the gospel prescribes. *These* are called *a church*, which in the original language, properly signifies a *select company*, or an assembly called forth from the rest of mankind for some particular purpose, more especially for the purpose of religious worship. The church in Corinth was that number of persons, who had come out from among their idolatrous fellow citizens for the true worship of God in Christ.

The apoſtle deſcribes them, *as ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, and called to be ſaints.* We cannot ſuppoſe, that by this deſcription he intended to repreſent *all* the members of the Corinthian church to be *gracious, godly* perſons: many paſſages, in this and his ſecond epiſtle to them, import that he thought otherwiſe; but theſe phraſes rather ſignify, that they had been called out of the world, and ſeparated from others, that they might be a peculiar people to God. *They were called to be holy.* The words, *ſanctified, ſaints,* and *holy*, applied to bodies of men, are uſually to be taken in the ſame general ſenſe, as *chriſtians, diſciples,* and *brethren;* to expreſs their *viſible* relation and *profeſſed* character, rather than a certain judgment concerning their habitual temper. The ſabbath, the temple, its utenſils, and the ground on which it ſtood, are called *holy*, and ſaid to be *ſanctified*, becauſe they were ſeparated from a common to a ſacred uſe. The nation of the Jews, in which, at its beſt ſtate, were great numbers of ungodly men, is called holy, as being ſeparated from other nations, for the ſervice of the true God. Moſes ſays. *Ye are a holy people to the Lord, a peculiar treaſure, a kingdom of prieſts.* So the chriſtian church is called *a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* The word *ſaints*, in many places ſtands oppoſed, not to unſound Chriſtians, but to the heathen world, particularly in the paſſages which ſpeak of perſecution againſt the *ſaints*, of miniſtering to the *ſaints*, and of diſtributing to the neceſſities of the *ſaints;* and in that remarkable paſſage which denominates the children of a believer *holy*, in diſtinction from the children of the unbelieving, who are called *unclean.*

THE apoſtle farther deſcribes the Corinthian church, as conſiſting of thoſe who *call on the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt;* who own him to be their Lord and Saviour, profeſs to hope for ſalvation through him and worſhip God in his name.

HE directs his epiſtle *to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, both theirs and ours.* In this addreſs, he ſignifies, that there is a ſacred relation ſubſiſting among all Chriſtians in every place, and that, as they profeſs ſubjection to one common Lord, ſo they ought to maintain communion one with another.

THE words of our text will naturally lead us to conſider,

I. THE *nature* of a church of God.

II. THE *end* of its inſtitution.

III. THE relation which *children* bear to it.

IV. THE *qualifications* requiſite for admiſſion into it. And,

V. THE *fellowſhip*, which ought to ſubſiſt among its members.

I. WE are to conſider the *nature* of a church of God.

ITS general nature, as a ſelect company, called forth from the world, for the worſhip and ſervice of God, we have already ſtated in the opening of our text. Some further illuſtrations, however, will be neceſſary.

THE church is ſometimes diſtinguiſhed into the *invisible* and the *visible* church. By the *invisible* church, is intended the whole number of real ſaints in all places and ages; the whole family in Heaven and earth; thoſe whom Chriſt will gather together in one

body in Heaven. This is that MOUNT ZION, THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, which consists of an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the general assembly and church of the first born, who were enrolled in Heaven. By the *visible* church are meant all those who have been visibly dedicated to God in Christ, and have not, by infidelity, heresy, or scandal, cut themselves off from the society of Christians; or, in the words of our apostle, *all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE visible church is again distinguished into the *catholic* or *general* church, and into *local* or *particular* churches. The word is often used to denote all the *professed* people of God in all nations and ages. In this large sense it is to be understood, when Christ is said to be made head of the church, and the church is described as subject to him. The whole Jewish nation, which was chosen of God, to be a peculiar people to himself, is called *the church.* It is said of Moses, *he was in the church in the wilderness.*

WHEN this people, by their great and increasing corruption, were ripening apace for destruction, God sent his own Son, the promised Redeemer to rescue from ruin his sinking church, and place it on a larger and surer establishment. By his teaching, and the ministry of his apostles, who were trained up under his immediate discipline, a considerable number of subjects were gained over to his kingdom, while he was on earth. Just before his ascension, he gave these apostles a commission to go forth, and spread his doctrine, and collect subjects among all nations,

His church, which before ſtood on the foundation of the prophets, now ſtands on the foundation of the apoſtles alſo, he himſelf being the corner ſtone, in which both parts of the foundation meet and are united. The church was formerly limited to one nation, but now it is indiſcriminately extended to all. In the city of Jeruſalem there were many, who, before the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, conſorted for the worſhip of God in Chriſt. To theſe were ſoon added multitudes, who continued in the apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were called *the church*. After the goſpel was ſpread to ſuch an extent, that it was no longer poſſible for all the believers to attend the worſhip of God in the ſame place, particular religious ſocieties, in divers places, were formed for the convenience of worſhip, each of which had the name of *a church*.

These ſocieties of Chriſtians, united in different places for mutual edification in the joint worſhip of God, are what we mean by *particular* churches, in diſtinction from the *catholic* or *universal* church. Thus the Chriſtians in Corinth, thoſe in Galatia, thoſe in Epheſus, thoſe in Theſſalonica, are called *a church*. But as all theſe particular churches received the ſame goſpel, maintained the ſame form of worſhip, and profeſſed ſubjection to the ſame Lord, ſo they are often conſidered as *one* church. Though we read of many churches, yet theſe are only ſo many different parts of the ſame univerſal church. They are members of the ſame great body, apartments of the ſame houſe, provinces of the ſame empire. With regard to their ſeveral juriſdictions and places of worſhip, they are diſtinct; but yet one in the main, as they call

on the ſame Jeſus, their common Saviour and Lord.

As there was in the apoſtolic times, ſo there is now, frequent occaſion for new churches to be formed. But from the preceding obſervations, it appears, that whenever a new church is erected, careful regard ſhould be had to her communion with other churches, as well as to the communion of her own members among themſelves; otherwiſe the body of Chriſt is divided, and the bond of peace is broken.

Among the members of every particular church, there is always ſuppoſed to be a ſolemn covenant and agreement to walk together in the commands and ordinances of Chriſt, to watch over one another in meekneſs and love, and to be fellow-helpers to the kingdom of God. The church in Corinth is ſaid to *come together into one place.* The church in Jeruſalem is cautioned *not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together;* and required, to *exhort one another, and to conſider one another, that they may provoke to love and to good works.* And Chriſtians are are enjoined to *be ſubject one to another.*

The covenant between the members of a particular church, to walk together in the ordinances of Chriſt, is of ſacred obligation; and when any of them have occaſion to remove to another church, they ſhould do it in a manner conſiſtent with Chriſtian order, peace and communion. When a number of Chriſtians unite in a new church, ſtill they muſt conſider themſelves as members of the general body, and ſeek, not merely their own profit but the profit of many.

II. The *end* for which a church was inſtituted, and the purpoſe for which we are called into it, is what we propoſed, in the ſecond place, to conſider.

CHRIST's kingdom is not of this world. As the nature, ſo the deſign of it is purely ſpiritual; it is, that in the enjoyment of ſuitable means we may be trained up in knowledge and holineſs; and thus formed to a meetneſs for future glory.

IT is ſaid, *the Lord added to the church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.* This is not to be underſtood as importing, that all who joined themſelves to the church were finally ſaved. There were in that, as there are in all ages, many who call Chriſt their Lord, and eat and drink in his preſence, but ſtill are workers of iniquity. But they are called *the ſaved*, becauſe they are admitted to the offers and means of ſalvation. In this ſenſe alſo, baptiſm is ſaid to *ſave* us; not as conveying an immediate right to ſalvation, but as being the appointed way of introduction into the viſible church, where the means of ſalvation are afforded. In the ſame ſenſe we are to underſtand thoſe paſſages, where ſalvation is promiſed to whole families on the faith of the head. Not that *his* faith entitles *them* to eternal life, but that it brings them into the viſible church, and to the enjoyment of the means of ſalvation. *Noah, by faith, prepared an ark to the ſaving of his houſe; the like figure whereunto, even baptiſm doth now ſave us.*

As without holineſs, none can be admitted into God's heavenly kingdom, *Chriſt gave himſelf for the church, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh.* The church, in our text, is deſcribed, as conſiſting of thoſe *who are called to be*

holy. Chriſt has ſet in his church, teachers for her edification, *that we might all come in the unity of faith and knowledge, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt; and profeſſing the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things.*

Love is a moſt important branch of goſpel holineſs. Chriſtians *are chosen in Chriſt, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love;* and might *purify their ſouls in obeying the truth, through the ſpirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* Chriſt has, therefore, appointed that his diſciples, dwelling together in ſocial connection, and maintaining fellowſhip in religious duties, ſhould increaſe and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. They are directed *to forbear one another in love, and keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace, because there is one body*, or church, of which they are all members, *and one ſpirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptiſm.* In order to their enjoying the grace of God, for their increaſe and edification, they muſt, like the parts of a building, be *fitly framed into each other, and be builded together for an habitation of God through the ſpirit.*

Having illuſtrated the nature and deſign of a church of God, we will now attend to the next propoſed inquiry.

III. What relation *children* bear to the church?

This will be neceſſary, previouſly to our ſtating the qualifications of adult proſelytes.

When firſt the apoſtles went forth to preach the goſpel, and erect churches in the world, mankind in general were in a ſtate of *heathenism*, or *judaism*; and, either had not heard of the goſpel, or did not

believe it to be divine. From among these, were they to make proselytes to Christianity.

What they required of the proselytes, whom they admitted into the church of God, was a professed belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. This profession of faith in Christ necessarily implied a promise of obedience to him.

Now as the apostles admitted adult proselytes into the church by baptism, so there is sufficient ground to believe, that they admitted to this ordinance the children of proselytes, in token of God's merciful regard to them, and of their parents' obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this general sense, the baptised offspring of believers are within the church; having God's covenant seal upon them, and being under the care of those who have covenanted to bring them up for him.

As many as are comprehended within God's covenant, and are the subjects of its gracious promises, undeniably belong to the church; for this is founded on the covenant. That the children of professed believers are within the covenant, is evident from passages of scripture, too numerous to be here particularly recited. The promise to Abraham was made also to his infant seed, who were to recieve the seal and token of the promise, as well as he; and as many as received it not, were said to have broken God's covenant; and these were to be cut off, or excluded from among their people. Had they not been within the covenant, and among the people of God, their want of the seal could not have been a breach of the covenant, or an exclusion from the people. Moses says to the congregation of Israel, *Ye stand all of you before the Lord your God; all the*

men of Israel, your little ones and your wives; that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, that he may establish thee for a people to himself, as he hath sworn to Abraham. Expreſs promiſes are made to children, as the ſeed of thoſe who are in covenant, particularly the promiſe of God's word, and of his ſpirit. *God established a testimony in Jacob, which he commanded the fathers, that they should make it known to their children, that the generation to come might also know it. Circumcision has much the advantage every way, chiefly because to them are committed the oracles of God. To Jacob his servant, and to Israel his chosen,* God promiſes, *I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses.* This is God's covenant with them who turn from tranſgreſſion in Jacob. *My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed.* Infants are called the children of the church; and the gentiles are deſcribed in prophecy, as coming to the church with their children in their arms. *All these gather themselves together and come to thee;* to Zion, God's church, *they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.* The children of thoſe who are in covenant, are diſtinguiſhed from others as God's children, born unto him. God ſays to his ancient church, *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine; but thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me, and hast sacrificed them: thou hast slain my children.* It is foretold, that in the time of the church's proſperity, *the people shall not labour*

in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. The Redeemer is described by Isaiah, as one *who shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom.* When he appeared on earth, he commanded that children should be brought to him: those who were brought, he took into his arms, and blessed, declaring them subjects of his kingdom. But in what sense are they such, if they belong not to his church, but to the kingdom of Satan? When Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, he pointed out the subjects of it in such general terms, as might naturally be supposed to include children; and his apostles, who knew how he had ever treated children, who had heard his directions concerning them, and who could not be ignorant, that, under former dispensations of the covenant, children were comprehended with their parents, must understand them to be included in this instruction, *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Accordingly, in the first instance of their administering baptism, after this commission, they placed the reason of it, and the right to it, on a basis which alike supports the baptism of believers, and of their children. *Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* They considered the children of believers as holy, in distinction from the children of unbelievers. And it appears to have been their practice, when they baptized a believing householder, to baptize also his household; those who were *his*, and under his government. And it is observable, that among all the instances of baptism, mentioned in the New

Teſtament, we find not one baptized at adult age, who appears to have been born of Chriſtian parents; but they were all proſelytes from judaiſm, or from heatheniſm.

Our Engliſh word CHURCH, ſignifies the houſe, or family of the Lord. It is a well choſen word; for the church is often called, a *family* or *household*. But who needs to be told, that children are members of the family in which they are born? It is often called a *city*, a *nation*, a *people*. But who ever imagined that theſe terms excluded children? If a city is incorporated are not children members of the corporation, as well as their parents? If a privilege is granted to a people, do not children become intitled to it. If a form of government is ſettled in a nation, do not children come under the form.

You will aſk, how can children be brought within the church without their own conſent? But as well may you aſk, how ſhould they be born under the goſpel; or how ſhould they be created rational beings, without their own conſent? If it is a privilege to enjoy the example, inſtruction and prayers of good men, and to be placed under the care of thoſe who are ſolemnly bound to give them a pious education, then it is a privilege to be born within the church, and to receive in childhood the ſeal of the covenant. And will any complain, that God beſtows on them mercies, before they had conſented to take them?

Certain religious duties are incumbent on children, as ſoon as they arrive to a natural capacity to perform them. But has not God a right to enjoin ſuch duties as his wiſdom ſees fit? Muſt he conſult his creatures to know what laws he may make for them? Was not the covenant in the plains of Moab made with little ones, as well as with the men of If-

rael? With thoſe who are not, as well as with thoſe who were then preſent? Are there not moral obligations which reſult from our rational nature, and from our place in the creation, as well as from our ſpecial covenant relation to God? Shall we conclude that all theſe obligations are void, for want of our previous conſent? To the validity of contracts between man and man, who ſtand on the foot of equality, mutual conſent is neceſſary: But God is a ſovereign, and 'his covenant he *commands* us.' When he promiſes us bleſſings, and enjoins duties as conditions of the bleſſings, he ſtates to us the tenor of his covenant, and, by his ſupreme authority, brings us under the obligations of it, whether we have conſented to it, or not.

Now if the children of believers are under the covenant, and within the church of God, they ought to receive the ſeal and token of their relation to him; to be taught, as ſoon as they are able to underſtand, the nature of religion; and to be conſidered, when they come forward in life, as under the watch of the church. They ſhould be nurſed at her ſide; and, when they have competency of knowledge, ſhould be invited to her actual communion. If they behave in a manner unworthy of their relation, they ſhould be treated with, and exhorted to repentance. If they prove contumacious and incorrigible, they are, after due patience, to be cut off from their people. Such appears to be the ſtate of children.

IV. We proceed to inquire, what qualifications are requiſite for the admiſſion of adults into the church, and for their enjoyment of all goſpel ordinances?

The queſtion is twofold: *First*, What a church ought to require of thoſe whom ſhe admits to her

communion? And, *Secondly*, What qualifications a perſon muſt find in himſelf to juſtify his coming to the communion?

The firſt queſtion is, What a church ought to require of thoſe whom ſhe admits to her communion?

The anſwer in general is, She is to require the ſame as the apoſtles required.

Those whom the apoſtles admitted to fellowſhip with them in breaking of bread, and in prayer, being firſt inſtructed in the doctrines and evidences of Chriſtianity, profeſſed to believe, that *this* was a divine religion.

The Jews, who were baptized on the day of penteceſt, gladly received the word of the goſpel. The eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, declared his belief, that Jeſus was the Son of God. The heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the doctrine of Paul; and ſhe was judged faithful to the Lord. The jailor is ſaid to have believed in God. When the people of Samaria believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptized, both men and women.

The churches were enjoined to put away from among them thoſe wicked perſons who would not be reclaimed. We may, therefore, conclude, that ſuch were not received without a profeſſion of repentance.

A Christian church is, then, to require of thoſe, whom ſhe admits to her communion, thoſe three things; a competent knowledge of the eſſential doctrines and precepts of religion; a profeſſed belief of, and ſubjection to them; and a blameleſs converſation; or, where this had been wanting, a profeſſion of repentance. Theſe things are, in the nature of the

caſe, neceſſary; for it is palpably abſurd for a man to join himſelf to a Chriſtian church, and attend upon its ordinances, unleſs he underſtands the nature, and believes the truth of that religion on which it is founded; and has ſuch a ſenſe of its importance, as to reſolve that he will be governed by it. And every perſon of competent knowledge, a good profeſſion, and a correſpondent life, has a right, in the view of the church, to the enjoyment of goſpel ordinances, whenever he claims it.

WHATEVER may be the opinion of a church, concerning the neceſſity of ſaving grace to qualify one, in the ſight of God, for Chriſtian communion, ſhe cannot juſtly exclude the perſon we have deſcribed; becauſe a good profeſſion, and a converſation agreeable to it, is all the evidence which ſhe can have in his favor. She can judge the heart only by viſible fruits. The controverſy concerning the neceſſity of internal holineſs, in the preſent caſe, can have no reference to the real practice of the church, in admitting members; for whether ſhe judges this to be a neceſſary qualification or not, ſtill ſhe muſt conduct in the ſame manner, and admit the ſame perſons. Namely, thoſe, and only thoſe, who have ſufficient knowledge of the goſpel, profeſs a belief of, and ſubjection to the goſpel, and contradict not that profeſſion by an ungodly converſation. She may, perhaps, think proper to require of her members a particular relation of their Chriſtian experiences. But be this relation ever ſo full, ſtill it is but the evidence of words—of a good profeſſion. The real ſincerity of the heart, after all, is known only to him, who ſeeth not as man ſeeth.

A CHURCH has no right, *on mere jealousy*, to ex-

clude from her communion any one who offers himſelf. She muſt firſt make it appear, that he is, by ignorance, hereſy or wickedneſs, diſqualified for communion. It is not incumbent on him to demonſtrate his inward grace; but on the church to prove his want of it. The burden of proof, in this caſe, lies wholly on the church; not on the claimant. If one claims privileges, the church is not to reject him, in a ſovereign, arbitrary manner, of her own will, without offering reaſons: She is either to admit him, or ſhew cauſe why ſhe refuſes. If ſhe ſhall convict him of any diſqualification, ſtill ſhe is not to treat him as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother: She is not to abandon him at once; but labour for his amendment. To reject claimants, in any other way, than by conviction on fair and open trial, is to ſet up a tyranny in the church, which Chriſt has no where warranted. It is to ſubvert that liberty with which Chriſt has made us free. The church ought to caution all againſt hypocriſy and diſſimulation in their approaches to divine ordinances; but ſhe is not to aſſume the judgment of men's hearts, raſhly intruding into things, which ſhe has not ſeen, and which belong only to God.

We are to aim at perfection, both as private chriſtians, and as churches. But we are to purſue this aim in a ſcriptural way; not by uſurping God's prerogative, or by excluding from our charity and fellowſhip, all who hope humbly and ſpeak modeſtly; all who cannot give the higheſt proof of their godly ſincerity; but by cleanſing *ourſelves* from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, and by conſidering one another to provoke unto love and good works.

After all, there will be bad, as well as good, in Christian societies. *The kingdom of Heaven is like a net cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind; and when it was full, they drew it to shore, and gathered the good into vessels and cast the bad away. So shall it be in the end of the world; then the wicked shall be severed from among the just.*

Having shewn what a church is to require of those whom she admits to her communion, we proceed to the second question.

What qualifications a person must find in himself to justify him in entering into the church, and attending on all gospel ordinances?

That we may bring this question within a narrow compass, and reduce it to a single point, it will be necessary to remove some things, which have often been blended with it, and occasioned much confusion in thinking and arguing upon it.

I. The question is not, Whether every person educated under the gospel, is *in duty bound* to attend on all divine ordinances in some Christian church? For this is universally granted.

Religion, in all its branches, is indispensibly enjoined on all men. Christ calls all men to be his disciples, to profess themselves such, and to act accordingly, on pain of final rejection from his presence. No man can free himself from his obligation to enter into the church, any more than he can free himself from his obligation to prayer, or any other duty. His wickedness may be a *bar* in the way of his admission; but it cannot be an excuse for his voluntary neglect. It is absurd to suppose, that one's sins should vacate his obligations to obedience. They who apprehend that they have no right to the communion of saints, ought by no means, to make themselves easy in thi

ſtate. The command ſtill extends to them; and their immediate concern ſhould be, to repent of that ſinfulneſs, which obſtructs their compliance with it.

2. The queſtion is not, whether one ought to come to the communion in an *impenitent*, *unconverted* ſtate; for no man is allowed to continue in ſuch a ſtate. The ſcripture never propoſes, or anſwers this queſtion, whether a man may attend on this, or that ordinance, while he remains impenitent in his ſins? becauſe it grants no man permiſſion to remain ſo; but commands all men, every where, to repent. It requires them to perform every duty in a pious and holy manner. It allows no neglect of, or hypocriſy and formality in duty. The man, who calls himſelf a ſinner, is not to imagine, that the ſame duties, or the ſame tempers, are not required of him, as of others; for all are required to be holy in all manner of converſation, and to be deeply humble for all the corruptions of their heart, and errors of their life. But,

3. It will be ſaid, though no man ought to remain in a ſinful ſtate, yet there are many who know themſelves to be in ſuch a ſtate; many who evidently find, that they have no governing regard to God and his commands, but are under the prevailing love of ſin and the world: Now, ought they, while they perceive themſelves to be in this ſtate, to come into the church and attend on the holy communion?

If any aſk this queſtion, my anſwer is, it is a queſtion in which no body is concerned. It cannot poſſibly be a caſe of conſcience with any man. The perſon here ſuppoſed is one, who knows himſelf to be an habitual ſinner; one who has no governing regard to his duty; but is prevailingly bent to wickedneſs; and, therefore, he cannot be ſuppoſed to have any conſci-

entious ſolicitude about his duty in this matter. It is abſurd to imagine, he ſhould be ſolicitous to know and do his duty here, and yet have no regard to it in any thing elſe. If in other external acts of duty he is influenced by unworthy motives, the ſame unworthy motives, and not a regard to the will of God, would influence him in coming into the church. The queſtion is merely a matter of ſpeculation; it concerns no man's practice. One, who lives regardleſs of the will of God in general, is juſt as regardleſs of it in the caſe under conſideration. He does not wiſh to be inſtructed in the matter, that he may conform to the divine will: if he did, he would be as careful to conform to it in things which are already plain. The ſcripture puts no ſuch caſe, for it is not a ſuppoſable caſe, that a man, whoſe heart is ſet in him to do evil, ſhould have any conſcientious ſcruples in this point, or any other. The proper anſwer to ſuch an inquirer will be, you are in a moſt awful ſtate, under the power and guilt of ſin. So long as you live in ſubjection to the fleſh, you cannot pleaſe God. You are expoſed to everlaſting condemnation. Repent, therefore, of your wickedneſs, ſeek God's forgiveneſs, and henceforward walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameleſs.

4. The only queſtion which can be a caſe of conſcience, and which it concerns us to anſwer, is this; what a *ſerious* perſon ought to do, who is in doubt concerning his ſpiritual ſtate?

He believes the goſpel to be divine, has ſome ſenſe of its importance, and feels a concern to obtain the ſalvation which it brings. It is his deſire to know, and his purpoſe to do, the will of God. But ſtill he finds ſo many corruptions in his heart, and devia-

tions from duty in his practice, that he dares not conclude himself in a state of grace. If he has hopes, they are mingled with painful fears. Now ought such a person to come within the church, and participate in all divine ordinances? Or is he to delay till his fears are dispelled?

This is the real state of the question; and can any hesitate what answer to give?

We have before shewn, that the purpose for which men are called into a church state is that, in the enjoyment of suitable means, they may be trained up in knowledge and holiness, to a preparation for future glory. And if we have the same end in attending on ordinances, as God had in instituting them, it cannot be doubted but we are qualified for the enjoyment of them. If then we can say, our end in coming to the communion is, that we may conform to God's will, may be in the way of his blessing, and may be directed and quickened in his service, we are undoubtedly warranted to approach it.

For a person to judge whether he may come to the communion, the question rather is, what are his present views, desires and purposes; than what is the habitual state of his soul? The former may be known by immediate inward reflection: the latter is to be discovered only by a course of examination and experience.

Let us now attend to the practice of the apostles.

The Jews, who assembled at the temple on the day of pentecost, to celebrate that festival, beheld with indignation, and treated with mockery, the miraculous gifts of the spirit, then bestowed on the disciples of Jesus, in confirmation of his divine authority. Peter,

on this occaſion, roſe up, and, in a pertinent diſcourſe, laid before them ſuch ſtriking evidence of Jeſus being the promiſed Meſſiah, that thouſands were convinced of their great guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory, and anxiouſly inquired what they muſt do? Being told, that they muſt repent and be baptized for the remiſſion of ſins, they gladly received the word, and were baptized, and admitted to the apoſtle's fellowſhip. It is the doctrine of this ſame Peter, that believers muſt make their calling and election ſure, by adding to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and every other grace. But does Peter tell theſe new converts, that, becauſe they had not had time thus to prove the ſincerity of their converſion, it was not ſafe to receive baptiſm, and enter into the church? Does he adviſe them to wait a while till they could manifeſt the reality of their repentance by its fruits? No, he admits them to fellowſhip immediately; but with this important caution, *save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

In the ſame manner the apoſtles conducted in the baptiſm of Cornelius, the people of Samaria, the Jaylor, Lydia, and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Had they conſidered aſſurance, as a qualification neceſſary to juſtify perſons in coming into the church, would they not, on theſe occaſions, have cautioned their proſelytes againſt receiving baptiſm immediately? Would they not have adviſed them to a greater trial of themſelves than could have been made in a few hours?

It cannot be pretended, that theſe proſelytes had a certain knowledge of their own ſincerity. Much leſs can it be ſuppoſed, that the apoſtles knew them to be ſound converts. *They* knew men's hearts no other-

wife, than *we* may know them, by view of what appears in their lives. They could only, hence, form a rational judgment, a charitable presumption. The disciples at Jerusalem believed not Paul to be a disciple, nor did even the apostles venture to receive him as such, till they had evidence from the testimony of Barnabas. Yea, we find in fact, that they admitted into the Christian church many, who afterward appeared to be ungodly. Simon, the sorcerer, is a remarkable instance. We learn from Paul's epistles, that in most of the churches to which he wrote, there were great numbers of unsound professors. The apostles, therefore, did not know, that all, whom they received into the church, were savingly converted; for it is manifest, that many of them were not so. And since they received new proselytes, whose sincerity must, at present, be doubtful to themselves, as well as others, without the least intimation of a necessity of delaying for the removal of doubts, we may with great safety, conclude, that a serious person, who believes the gospel, and desires to be found in the way of duty, and of the divine blessing, though still in doubt concerning the gracious sincerity of his heart, has a right to come to the communion of the church.

And indeed, if Christians were to delay, till all their doubts were removed, I am afraid few would come to it at all. And perhaps these few would not be of the better sort. While the self confident hypocrite drew near, the meek, the modest, the humble, would stand afar off.

The members of the church in Corinth, as we learn from Paul's first letter to them, ran into most scandalous disorders in their attendance on the Lord's supper. They behaved in such a riotous manner, as made it evident that they discerned not the Lord's [illegible] distinguished not this ordinance from a com-

mon meal, or even from a Pagan feſtival. One took before others his own ſupper; and one was hungry, having eaten nothing before he came to it; and another was drunken, having indulged to exceſs there; and the poorer members were deſpiſed. This unworthy partaking the apoſtle rebukes in the ſevereſt terms; and warns them, that they were eating and drinking judgment to themſelves, of which they had melancholy proof in the ſickneſs and mortality which had been ſent among them.

But what advice does he give them in the caſe? Does he direct them to withdraw from the Lord's table? No, he ſhews them the danger of coming in this manner, and exhorts them to come better prepared and diſpoſed. *Let a man examine himself, and ſo let him eat.* He does not ſay, let a man examine himſelf and withdraw; but let him examine and partake. *And when ye come together, tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to condemnation.* This paſſage, far from being a juſt ground of diſcouragement, proves the point which we have ſtated, that ſuch as have a deſire to comply with a divine inſtitution, are not to delay, on account of their humble doubts concerning their converſion. If the fear of unworthy partaking were a reaſon for not partaking at all, as well might the fear of praying, or reading and hearing the word, in an unworthy manner, be a reaſon for omitting theſe; for it is evident that the ſcripture enjoins the ſame temper of heart in *theſe* duties, as in *that*. The truth is, we are required to attend on every ordinance with godly ſincerity; and a ſuſpicion of our inſincerity is not an excuſe for neglect; but a reaſon for examination, repentance and amendment.

Some perhaps will ſay, for ſome have ſaid, we have

ſenſible deſires to approach to God in all his ordinances; but there may be deſires which are not gracious; and we fear *ours* are ſuch; we, therefore, dare not approach, for we think leſs guilt is incurred by abſtinence, than by attendance.

But conſider, God requires your attendance; and you muſt either attend or forbear, comply or refuſe: There is no medium: and certainly there can be no more grace in your *fears*, than there may be in your *deſires*. If your deſires to attend an ordinance are not ſpiritual, neither can the fears, which reſtrain you from attending, be called ſpiritual: You can, therefore, be no better accepted in your neglect, than in your compliance; for you act on no better principles in the former, than in the latter.

It is vain to inquire, in what way you ſhall contract leaſt guilt: Your buſineſs is not to contrive how you can ſin at the cheapeſt rate: Your care ſhould be not to ſin at all.

If you ſay, you decline the communion through fear of offending God; examine whether you are not deceived. Are you as conſcientious in every thing elſe, as you would ſeem to be in this? Are you as much afraid to offend God in other matters, as you pretend to be in this? If you allow yourſelves in any ſin, or in the neglect of any duty, be aſſured it is not the fear of offending God, but ſomething elſe, that hinders your approach to his table. But if you really have ſuch a fear running through all your conduct, and operating in all your deliberate actions, you have a very good evidence of your right to the holy communion: for, in all acts of worſhip, you ſerve God acceptably, when you ſerve him with reverence and godly fear.

The man found at the marriage feaſt without a wedding garment, fell under the awful cenſure of the king, who commanded that he ſhould be bound and caſt into outter darkneſs.

WILL you say then, it is the safer part not to come to the marriage feast at all, lest being found unworthy, we share the fate of this guest? Remember, they who made light of the king's invitation, and refused to come to his son's marriage, were treated with no more lenity than the unworthy guest. He sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burnt up their city. What then shall we conclude? Why, that a wicked man is safe no where. He who will not forsake iniquity, is secure neither in the church nor out of it.

THE crime of this guest was, not that he was found at the *feast:* but that he was found *unsuitably attired.* The same dirt and rags would have been offensive elsewhere.

THE servants were ordered to go out into the highways, and call to the marriage as many as they found; and they accordingly gathered together both bad and good. The man, you see, was a poor beggar, called into the king's house, from out of the street. How should he obtain a wedding garment? He had none of his own. He must come to the king's house to receive one; for there was clean raiment, as well as meat and drink. Where then lay his great crime? Surely not coming in to the king's house, for he was bidden to come; and such as refused were destroyed; but in sitting among the guests in his ragged and defiled condition, and refusing to wear the pure raiment provided for him. And such will be the condemnation of false professors at the last day; not simply that they have come within God's church, and attended on his ordinances; but that, while they have sat under the gospel dispensation, made a good profession, and enjoyed all the means of holiness, they have continued in the love and practice of their sins; that while they have heard Christ teach in their streets, and have eaten and drunk in his presence, they have been work-

ers of iniquity. We are not to imagine that we may safely work iniquity, if we will only keep out of the church. Such will be condemned wherever they are found. The kingdom of God is come nigh to us; his word and ordinances are given to us. We cannot place ourselves in the condition of heathens, if we would; for God has placed us in a very different condition. The light has risen upon us; the word of salvation is sent unto us. And now what choice shall we make? If we treat God's ordinances with utter contempt, we are condemned; if we attend upon them in such a manner as to receive no benefit from them, still we are condemned. Our only safety then is, to profess the gospel, and obey it; name the name of Christ and depart from iniquity; this is to come to the marriage supper, and put on the wedding garment.

Let us fear lest we receive the grace of God in vain. Let us beware lest our privileges, instead of being the means of our salvation, serve only to aggravate our final condemnation.

You see how the case stands. All are required to come within God's church, and attend on his appointed ordinances; and none are allowed to do this in a hypocritical and ungodly manner.

Your duty lies plain before you; study no evasions; God's commands are express; your obligation to obey is indispensible. Attend on the ordinance in question, and every other, as you have opportunity; keep in view the end of their institution, which is the promotion of faith and purity. Imagine not that ordinances operate by a kind of charm, to do you good without making you better; you will only be accepted in hearing Christ teach, and in eating in his presence, when you also depart from iniquity. For his kingdom is not merely *meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

1 Corin. i. 2.

Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

WE have already considered the *nature* of a Christian church; the *purpose* of its institution; the relation of *children* to it; and the *qualifications* necessary to an attendance on its ordinances.

What now lies before us is,

V. To explain that *fellowship*, or *communion*, which does, or ought to subsist among professing Christians, whether in the same or in divers churches.

To this subject, we are led by the last clause in our text; *Grace and peace to the church of God in Corinth, with all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*

We are here taught, that, as all Christians, in whatever place they may dwell, or may worship, are disciples of the same Lord, and call on God in the name of the same Mediator; so there is an important relation, and ought to be a sacred fellowship among them.

For the illustration of this matter, I would observe,

1. There is a *virtual* fellowship or communion among all true saints, whether near or remote: whether known or unknown to each other. They

are all engaged in the ſame deſign, united in the ſame intereſt, and partakers of many of the ſame things.

THIS is the ſenſe in which the word is moſt frequently uſed in ſcripture; and this is analogous to the ſenſe which it ordinarily bears in common life. Particularly,

REAL ſaints have *fellowſhip in the goſpel.* They have received one and the ſame rule of faith and practice. Though they may differ in their opinions concerning ſome particular things contained in the goſpel, yet their ſentiments in the eſſential doctrines and precepts of it, are the ſame.

THEY have received one *common faith; like precious faith.* Though their faith may differ in its extent and degree, yet, in its object, nature and influence, it is one and the ſame. The object of it is divine truth; the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth; the influence of it is purifying the heart.

THEY are all formed to the ſame *holy temper.* They are renewed after the image of God; are joint partakers of a divine nature. There may be great variety in the time, manner and circumſtances of their renovation, and in the ſtrength and degree of the Chriſtian temper; but holineſs, in its general nature, is the ſame in all. It is a conformity to God's moral character.

THEY are all partakers of the ſame divine *ſpirit.* There are diverſities of gifts and operations; but it is the ſame ſpirit that worketh all in all. Hence the apoſtle ſpeaks of *the fellowſhip of the ſpirit*, and *the communion of the Holy Ghoſt.*

THEY are engaged in the ſame *good work;* in the ſame *great deſign.* They are working out their ſalvation, and promoting in their reſpective places, the

intereſt of Chriſt's kingdom. They are fellow labourers in the ſame ſervice, the ſervice of God and their own ſouls. They are fellow workers in the ſame holy calling. They are fellow ſoldiers in the ſame ſpiritual warfare; fighting againſt the ſame enemies, ſin, ſatan, and the world; applying the ſame armour, the ſhield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and the ſword of the ſpirit; and they act under the ſame leader, Jeſus the captain of their ſalvation.

They have one common *interest*. They have a joint intereſt in the bleſſed God; for there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in them all. They bear the ſame relation to Jeſus Chriſt; for there is one Lord and Saviour, by whom are all things, and they by him. There is one common ſalvation, in which they all are ſharers. They are all juſtified by the ſame atonement, waſhed in the ſame blood, ſanctified by the ſame grace, and ſaved by the ſame interceſſion. They have an intereſt in the ſame promiſes, and a title to the ſame inheritance. They are called in the ſame hope, and are joint heirs of the ſame glory. They are fellow citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God.

In theſe reſpects, there is a fellowſhip among all ſincere Chriſtians. In many of theſe things, ſaints on earth have communion with thoſe in Heaven.

One connot but remark here, how diverſe this fellowſhip is, from that which ſome boaſt of; *a mutual sympathy, or fellow feeling, between sincere Christians, by which one immediately perceives the grace, and knows the character of another.* The ſcripture never uſes the word *fellowship* in this ſenſe, nor does

it ſpeak of any ſuch thing in other terms. It is certain, that the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians were not acquainted with ſuch a ſympathetic intercourſe of ſpirits. If they were, why did not the eleven diſciples diſcern, that Judas was a hypocrite; Why did not the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem believe Paul to be a diſciple? Why did not they feel his graces, when, after his converſion, he eſſayed to join himſelf to them? Why could not the apoſtles themſelves be ſatisfied of his converſion, without the teſtimony of Barnabas? What occaſion was there, that Chriſtians ſhould carry with them letters of commendation, as we find they did, when they travelled to places where they had not been known.

As the goſpel knows no ſuch correſpondence of heart between Chriſtians; and never once uſes the word fellowſhip, or communion in any ſuch ſenſe, it is a perverſion of ſcripture, as well as reaſon, to pretend to ſuch a thing now, and call it by a ſcripture name. I proceed to obſerve,

2. Besides the *virtual* communion, before deſcribed, among ſincere Chriſtians, there is an *actual* communion among thoſe who are known to, and have intercourſe with, one another. This conſiſts in mutual regards and good offices.

The good Chriſtian extends his benevolence to all, to ſtrangers, heathens and enemies; and, from this principle, ſhews kindneſs to all, as far as their occaſions require, and his circumſtances permit. But for them who appear to him in the character of ſaints, he has a love, not only of benevolence, but alſo of eſteem and approbation. He wiſhes well to all, whether good or bad; but he values men chiefly according to their virtuous converſation. While he is diſpoſed to do good to all, he reckons himſelf under

ſome ſuperior obligations to thoſe who are of the houſehold of faith. He delights in the ſaints as the excellent of the earth, and is the companion of them who fear God. He loves the brethren, and ſuch he eſteems all Chriſtians, whether they belong to the ſame ſociety with him, or to another. He confines not his regard to thoſe of his own ſect, or his own particular community; but, like the apoſtles, extends it to all who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt, *their* Lord, as well as *his*, and the common Saviour of them who believe.

In order to the exerciſe of true Chriſtian love, it is not neceſſary to know the ſincerity of men's hearts. It is enough that, by their profeſſion and converſation, they appear to us in the character of Chriſtian brethren, and by their works give us reaſonable ground to think they have faith. We may, in a proper ſenſe, have this *actual* fellowſhip with one who is not a ſincere Chriſtian; and may not have it with one who is ſuch. So long as Judas appeared in the character of a diſciple, his brethren had fellowſhip with him; they eſteemed him, placed confidence in him, and even thought him better than themſelves; but with Paul, the diſciples at Jeruſalem had not this *actual* fellowſhip; they confided not in him, nor believed him to be a diſciple, till he produced ſome proper evidence of a change in his ſentiments and practice.

3. There is alſo a *ſpecial* communion, which does, or ought to take place among thoſe Chriſtians, who are united in the ſame particular church, or religious ſociety.

As they have explicitly covenanted together for ſocial worſhip and common edification, ſo they are un-

der peculiar obligations to each other, unitedly to purſue this important purpoſe.

This *special* communion principally conſiſts in a joint attendance on the ordinances of Chriſt.

It is ſaid of thoſe who received the word preached by Peter, on the day of pentecoſt, *that they continued ſtedfast in the apoſtle's doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were together, and continued daily with one accord in the temple; praiſing God.* The apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts the profeſſors of religion, *that they conſider one another, to provoke to love and good works, not forſaking the aſſembling of themſelves together.* St. Paul ſpeaks of the Corinthian believers, as *coming together in the church, and into one place.* He repreſents *the whole church as coming together in one place*, for breaking of bread, for ſocial prayer, and for attendance on the preaching of the word. Theſe expreſſions teach us, that the members of a particular church ought to walk together in the ordinances, and unitedly to attend on the ſtated worſhip of God, as they are able, without unneceſſary neglect. And, indeed, it is included in the very idea of a particular church, that they worſhip God together, at the ſame time, and in the ſame place. The apoſtle directs the Corinthians, *when they come together, to tarry for one another;* for which ſurely there could be no reaſon, if they might diſperſe here and there, and ſome worſhip in one place, and ſome in another, and ſome no where.

The acceptableneſs of worſhip, indeed, depends not on the place where it is performed. But it much depends on a ſpirit of peace and union among the wor-

ſhippers. For this reaſon, the church is to come together into one place, that there may be no ſchiſm, but all her members may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God. They muſt be builded together, that they may become an habitation of God through the ſpirit; muſt be fitly framed together, that they may grow into an holy temple in the Lord.

THERE may be frequent occaſions for the members of the ſame church to meet for ſocial worſhip in different places, and even in private houſes. Paul, when he abode in Epheſus, preached and taught both publicly, and from houſe to houſe. We are not to imagine a temple, or public houſe, ſo peculiarly ſacred, that divine worſhip can no where elſe be uſeful to men, or pleaſing to the Deity. The private meetings of chriſtians, conducted with a real view to peace and edification, are much to be commended. But when any of the members of a church withdraw from the uſual place of worſhip, and aſſemble elſewhere, either with an intention to cauſe diviſion, or in a manner which tends to it, they violate the order of Chriſt's houſe, and interrupt the communion which ought to ſubſiſt in it. Though Paul taught from houſe to houſe, yet he approved not thoſe teachers, who *crept* into houſes to lead the ſimple captive, and diſturb Chriſtian fellowſhip. He warns Chriſtians to mark and avoid thoſe who cauſe diviſions, for ſuch ſerve not the kingdom of Chriſt, but their own private deſigns. One great end of ſocial worſhip is peace and union; and it ought always to be conducted in a manner which tends not to defeat, but promote this end. It is not the ſacredneſs of one place rather than another, but the common edification, which obliges

the whole church to come together in one place. The members no longer walk in fellowſhip, than they thus unitedly attend the ſacred orders of Chriſt's houſe.

Among divine ordinances, the *Lord's ſupper* deſerves particular attention; for one main deſign of this was to be a mean of brotherly communion. Eating and drinking together, at the ſame table, is a *natural* act of fellowſhip. Doing this at the Lord's table is an act of *Chriſtian* fellowſhip. *The cup which we bleſs, and the bread which we break, is the communion of Chriſt's blood, and of his body:* and by our joint participation of them, we acknowledge ourſelves to be one family, the children of one parent, the diſciples of one Lord. *We being many are one body, and one bread,* or loaf; *for we are all partakers of that one loaf.* This ordinance is a love feaſt, and ought to be *kept, not with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth.* No trifling cauſes ſhould divert or detain us from it; and no evil paſſions accompany us in it.

And here I cannot but take notice of a practice too common among the profeſſors of religion; *their withdrawing from the Lord's table, becauſe a particular brother has injured, or offended them;* for which I find no foundation in the goſpel. We are, indeed, to *withdraw from every brother who walks diſorderly.* But how? By breaking up the communion? No, but by *putting away the wicked perſon from among us; and by purging out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump.* We may think our brother unworthy of the privilege which he aſſumes; but ſhall *his* unworthineſs deprive *us* of the privilege? We are, in proper ſeaſon, to take the meaſures preſcribed in the goſpel, for his reformation; but, in the mean time,

we are neither to abſent ourſelves from the table, nor to forbid his attendance; for we can juſtly exclude him only by conviction in a regular proceſs. If the caſe is ſo circumſtanced, that ſufficient evidence for his conviction cannot be produced, he muſt be left to the judge of all men. Whatever our opinion may be of his guilt, we are not to withdraw on account of his attendance. Judge nothing before the time.

You will ſay, *Charity is necessary in our attendance at Christ's table, but with such a brother, how can we sit down in charity?* People often confound themſelves in this matter, by their partial notions of charity. If by charity were intended an opinion of others as good Chriſtians, you could not ſit down in charity with thoſe of whom you thought otherwiſe. But where do you find this deſcription of charity? or where is this good opinion of all your fellow communicants required, in order to your ſitting at Chriſt's table? It is the effect, not the eſſence of charity, to hope all things. If you have a benevolent, meek, forgiving temper toward thoſe whom you think not to be true Chriſtians, you can ſet down in charity with them; for this is the ſcriptural idea of charity. If you remember a brother hath ought againſt you, go and be reconciled to him. If you have ought againſt a brother, go and tell him his fault. If he repent forgive him; if he repent not, ſtill indulge no rancor nor hatred in your heart. Thus ſit down at the feaſt in charity, in kind affection, to your brethren and to all men.

Perhaps ſome will ſay, 'We withdraw from the table when a brother has injured us, becauſe his preſence awakens in us unſuitable paſſions.'

But remember, the indulgence of malevolent paſſions is your ſin; and you are not to abſent yourſelves from communion, but to diſmiſs *them;* and ſo keep the feaſt in ſincerity and love. Malice and ill-will indulged in the heart are wrong, whoever is the object, whether a brother, or a heathen. And on this plea, you might as well withdraw, when the latter, as when the former had done you an injury.

Consider alſo, you were required to pray, and to hear the word, with the ſame charity which is required in the ſupper. *When you ſtand praying, you are to forgive if you have ought againſt any man.* And you are to *lay apart all guile, malice and envy;* and thus to *deſire the ſincere milk of the word; receiving it with meekneſs.* Your plea, therefore, might as well be urged for neglecting public worſhip, or even family prayer, be ſure, if the offender happens to be preſent, as for abſenting from the ſupper.

The truth is, you are never to excuſe yourſelves from acts of duty, on account of evil paſſions working in you; but immediately to war againſt them.

It will be aſked, *How can I have communion with a church, while ſhe tolerates ungodly and ſcandalous members?*

But let me aſk you, my friend, does ſhe tolerate them? If ſhe does, whoſe buſineſs is it to take the firſt ſtep towards rectifying the diſorder? It is yours, as much as any man's. It is yours principally. You pretend, that you ſee ſuch perſons in the church. Others perhaps ſee them not, or have not evidence againſt them. Have you reproved them? Have you taken a brother or two to aſſiſt you? Have you brought your complaint to the church? If you have done none of theſe things, you are the moſt reprehenſible of any

member; for you ſee the ſin, and expoſe it not. Go firſt, and do your own duty. You can have no pretence for withdrawing, till you know that the church actually tolerates vicious characters; and this you cannot know till you have taken the meaſures which Chriſt enjoins.

But though I may think a church to be, in the main, a true church, yet if I ſee errors in her, ought I not to teſtify againſt them by withdrawing from them? By no means. Your withdrawing is no teſtimony againſt her particular errors; it is only a general, indiſcriminate charge. It ſignifies that you are diſpleaſed at ſomething; but points out nothing. You are to commune with her; but not adopt her errors; then your conduct will ſpeak an intelligible language. Chriſt teſtified againſt the errors of the Jewiſh church, and laboured for her reformation; but ſtill he held communion with her as a church of God. Let his example be your rule.

This leads me to obſerve farther, that ſpecial fellowſhip among the members of a particular church muſt include mutual watchfulneſs, reproof and exhortation.

As Chriſtians, in the preſent ſtate, are but imperfect, one end of their covenanting and aſſociating together is, that they may afford mutual aſſiſtance in the great concerns of religion, and be fellow helpers in the work of their common ſalvation. Accordingly, they are required to conſider and admoniſh, comfort and encourage one another, as there is occaſion; to be all ſubject one to another, and to be clothed with humility. By virtue of our ſpecial relation, as members of one church, we are to rebuke our brethren,

and not ſuffer ſin upon them. Thoſe who offend, we are firſt to addreſs in a more private manner: them who are deaf to private expoſtulations, we are to bring before the church; ſuch as contemn the counſels of the church are to be cut off from her communion; but the penitent are to be reſtored in the ſpirit of meekneſs. Once more.

Our ſpecial fellowſhip requires mutual candor, condeſcenſion and forbearance.

We are to conſider ourſelves, and our brethren, not as ſinleſs, but imperfect beings, attended with infirmities, ſubject to temptations, liable to offend, and to be offended. While we are cautious not to give offence by doing things grievous to them, we ſhould make all reaſonable allowances for them, when they do things grievous to us. We ſhould neither ſtiffly oppoſe, nor zealouſly urge indifferent matters. We ſhould not ſeverely animadvert on ſmaller faults, nor magnify accidental failings into heinous crimes; but give every one's conduct the moſt favourable turn it will bear. Such is the apoſtle's advice. *We that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Him who is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful diſputation. Let us not judge one another; but judge this rather, that no man put a ſtumbling block in his brother's way. Be of the same mind one toward another. Condescend to men of low estate. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Follow the things which make for peace and edification. Let all your things be done with charity.*

4. The laſt branch of Chriſtian fellowſhip, which I ſhall mention, is that which ought to ſubſiſt among

different churches; among all who, in every place, call on the name of our common Lord.

As all Chriſtian churches are united under, and ſubject to one head, ſo they are members one of another, and therefore ought, like the members of the natural body, to preſerve a reciprocal intercourſe. The apoſtle ſays, *As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; ſo alſo is Chriſt. For by one ſpirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free.* Care, therefore, ſhould be taken, *that there be no ſchism, or diviſion in the body, but all the members ſhould have the ſame care one for another.*

A particular church ought to conſider herſelf, not as an unconnected ſociety, but as a part of Chriſt's general kingdom: her care muſt not be confined to herſelf, but extended to her ſiſter churches: She is to ſeek, not merely her own profit, but the profit of many.

Some diverſity of ſentiment and practice may take place in different churches, and yet all remain true churches of Chriſt; as there may be divers opinions among the members of the ſame church, and they ſtill be real chriſtians. We are neither to reject a church, nor to exclude a particular Chriſtian from our fellowſhip, for ſuppoſed errors, which appear not to be of ſuch a nature and magnitude, as to ſubvert the foundation of Chriſtianity. Our apoſtle teaches us, 'that we are to regard all as our fellow chriſtians, and all churches as ſiſter churches, who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours; who profeſs one body, one ſpirit,

and one hope of their calling ; and who hold the ſame head from which all the body is knit together. In a word, he cautions us, that ' we reject not thoſe whom God has received.' If we know a particular church, in which errors are admitted, we are to afford our aſſiſtance for her amendment. But ſo long as we believe God owns her, by continuing to her his word and ordinances, and bleſſing them for her ſpiritual benefit ; it is arrogance, it is impiety, for us to diſown her. We have no warrant to withdraw our fellowſhip from a church, unleſs ſhe has eſſentially departed from the goſpel ; or impoſes on us terms of fellowſhip, which we cannot in conſcience comply with.

If it be aſked, in what actions different churches are to have fellowſhip ? I anſwer ;

They ought occaſionally to commune with each other in the word, prayer, and breaking of bread ; to admit each other's members to occaſional communion with them ; to recommend their own members to other churches, into whoſe vicinity they may remove ; and to receive members of other churches on their recommendation. When Apollos paſſed from Epheſus into Achaia, the brethren in Epheſus wrote to the diſciples in Achaia to receive him. When Phebe went from Cenchrea to Rome, Paul wrote to the Roman church, that they ſhould receive her in the Lord, as becometh ſaints.

Churches are alſo to have fellowſhip, by mutual counſel and advice, when difficulties ariſe.

Though no church, or number of churches have an abſolute juriſdiction over other churches, yet they ſhould always be ready to afford help and aſſiſtance, at the requeſt of ſiſter churches, as occaſions may re-

quire. We find in the hiſtory of the Acts, that the church of Antioch, on a difficulty which aroſe there relating to circumciſion, ſent Barnabas and Paul, and certain others with them, to Jeruſalem, to conſult the apoſtles and elders of the church there, and to aſk their advice upon the matter. When thoſe meſſengers from Antioch came to Jeruſalem, they were received by the apoſtles and elders, and by the church. And when the apoſtles had determined the matter in queſtion, they, together with the church, ſent meſſengers, and by them, a letter to the Antiochean and other churches in the vicinity, declaring their opinion and advice in the caſe referred to them.

THIS example, as well as the reaſon of the thing, ſhews the propriety and neceſſity of mutual aſſiſtance among churches by counſel and advice, in order to the common edification and comfort.

I HAVE now diſtinctly illuſtrated the ſeveral matters propoſed to your conſideration. Permit me, before I conclude, to point out to you the proper improvement of this ſubject.

WE who have made an open profeſſion of religion, and have joined ourſelves to the church of God, with an explicit engagement to walk together in his commandments and ordinances, are now called upon to conſider the obligations we are under, and the duties eſpecially incumbent upon us.

1. LET US be well ſettled in the principles of that religion which we profeſs.

WE are called into a church ſtate, that, being edified in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we may be no more children, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſlight of men, and the cun-

ning craftineſs wherewith they lie in wait to deceive. Jeſus Chriſt is the ſame yeſterday, today, and for ever. His goſpel is ever the ſame; not variable like the humors and opinions of men. Therefore, be ye not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines, as if religion was ſometimes one thing, and ſometimes another. It is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace. We ought not indeed to be ſtiff and inflexible in our own ſentiments and uſages, merely becauſe they are our own. We ſhould give up former opinions, and adopt others, when evidence is offered ſufficient to juſtify the change. But then a fickleneſs of temper, a verſatility of ſentiment, a diſpoſition to fall in with every novel opinion, and to follow every impulſe of fancy, is utterly unbecoming a Chriſtian. Such unſteadineſs indicates either the want of competent knowledge, or the want of any fixed principles in religion.

Amidst the various opinions which are propagated and maintained, an honeſt chriſtian, I am ſenſible, may often be perplexed to determine what is truth. But then, I would obſerve, it is by no means neceſſary, that he ſhould be able to anſwer every argument adduced in ſupport of error. There are certain great and leading principles, in which every chriſtian muſt be ſuppoſed to be ſettled; and by theſe he may try the doctrines propoſed to him, and judge whether they are of God.

There are two grand points which the goſpel always keeps in view. One is the indiſpenſible neceſſity of holineſs in heart and life, in order to eternal happineſs. The other is, our entire dependence on the grace and mercy of God, through the Redeemer,

for pardon, ſanctification and glory. Every man, who profeſſes to be a Chriſtian, muſt be ſuppoſed to be ſettled in theſe grand points. The man, who imagines that he is not indebted to, nor dependent on a Saviour, or that there is no need of a conformity to his holy pattern and precepts, in order to final ſalvation, can, with no conſiſtency, pretend to be a chriſtian.

All ſuch doctrines, as plainly contradict either of theſe principles; ſuch, on the one hand, as exalt men above a dependence on Jeſus Chriſt, and the influences of the divine ſpirit; and ſuch, on the other hand, as confound the difference between virtue and vice, and obſtruct the influence of the divine commands, muſt be rejected, whatever ſpecious arguments may be urged in their favour.

2. Let us maintain a conſtant, devout attendance on the appointed ordinances of Chriſt.

If we careleſsly neglect theſe, we contradict the deſign of a church, and our own character as members of it.

Christians are bound to attend on all ordinances, one as well as another. The goſpel makes no diſtinction. The primitive Chriſtians continued ſtedfaſt in the apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

There are among us ſome, who profeſs the religion of Chriſt, and who, by their regular attendance at the ſanctuary, as well as by their general converſation, expreſs a regard for the religion which they profeſs; but yet abſent themſelves from the Lord's table. Such was not the practice of Chriſtians in the apoſtolic times. The celebration of the ſupper was then

a part of the ſtated worſhip of the Lord's day; and in this, as well as in other parts, all profeſſors joined. They continued ſtedfaſt in fellowſhip with the apoſtles, as well by breaking bread, as by prayer and doctrine. The diſciples at Troas, we are told, came together, on the firſt day of the week, not only to hear Paul preach, but alſo to break bread.

I URGE none to come blindly, or againſt his conſcience, to the holy table. Every one muſt judge for himſelf, and be perſuaded in his own mind. One man cannot ſee with another's eyes, nor act on another's faith. But then, it is a plain fact, Chriſt calls all to be his diſciples, and commands all his diſciples to ſhew forth his death by an attendance on his ſupper. And therefore, ſuch as are hindered by ſcruples concerning their fitneſs, muſt not make themſelves eaſy with them, but take pains for the removal of them. They muſt ſeek light, that, if they are in an error, they may rectify it; and if they are under ſin, they may repent of it. They muſt humbly apply to God for his grace to lead them into truth, and to purify their ſouls; and whatever doubts they have about a particular ordinance, they muſt diligently attend on all thoſe means which they think themſelves warranted to uſe. 'The meek, God will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way.'

3. WE are called to brotherly love, peace and unity.

THE goſpel urges love as the bond of perfectneſs, as a virtue of the firſt importance. Paul, in his epiſtles to the churches, never forgets to recommend to them, that they be joined together in the ſame mind—that they ſpeak the ſame things—that they have the ſame love—that there be no diviſions among them—

that they avoid ſuch as cauſe diviſions and offences. To ſhew how eſſential unity is to the being of a church, he compares it to a houſehold, which ſubſiſts by love, and in which all the members have one intereſt, and are guided by one head—To a building, all the parts of which are framed and compacted together—To a natural body, all whoſe limbs are animated by the ſame vital principle, and feel for each other.

BROTHERLY love is an extenſive grace. It is not confined to thoſe of our own ſociety; but reaches to all Chriſtians, and Chriſtian ſocieties in every place. The apoſtle wiſhes grace and peace to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus. We are to conſider all as our brethren, who appear to hold the eſſentials of the Chriſtian faith, and to maintain a practice agreeable to it; and to all ſuch brotherly love muſt extend. If our love reaches no farther than to thoſe of our own ſect, or thoſe who uſually worſhip with us, it is only a party ſpirit; it has nothing of the nature of Chriſtian love.

AGAINST ſuch a contracted idea of love, the apoſtle, in our context, carefully guards us. 'It has been declared to me,' ſays he, 'that there are contentions among you. Every one of you ſaith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Chriſt.' They were puffed up for one teacher againſt another. One admired this preacher; another that; and another a third; and, by their party attachments, raiſed troubleſome diſputes and dangerous contentions in the church. But, ſays he, 'Is Chriſt divided?' Were ye not all baptized in his name? Have ye not all profeſſed his religion? Why then run ye into parties, as if Chriſt was divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Why ſay ye, 'we are of Paul?' Do ye expect

ſalvation through him? He was not crucified for you. He only preaches Chriſt crucified; and Peter and Apollos do the ſame. 'Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Do ye imagine that baptiſm was deſigned to form you into diſtinct ſects? or that every one ought to follow the miniſter who baptized him, in oppoſition to others? And do ye think, that ye ought to love and eſteem, as brethren, thoſe only who are baptized by the ſame apoſtle, or in the ſame place and manner as ye were, as if ye were baptized into the name of the man, who baptized you? No, ye were baptized in the name of Chriſt, and are become members of his body, and, therefore, ye are the brethren of all Chriſtians, by whomſoever baptized; for ye are all baptized into one body.

You ſee, that baptiſm, a Chriſtian profeſſion, and a relation to a particular church, are not deſigned to unite one company of Chriſtians here, and another there, in oppoſition to each other; but rather to unite the whole Chriſtian world. This then, and this only, is true Chriſtian love, which extends its good wiſhes to the whole houſehold of faith; regards, as Chriſt's diſciples, all who, in every place, call on his name; and purſues, not merely its own private ends, but the general intereſt of Chriſt's kingdom, and the common welfare of his ſubjects.

True Chriſtian love to thoſe of our own ſociety cannot ſtop ſhort of a general love of ſaints. The love of the brethren, as ſuch, is a love of their holy and virtuous character; and if, on this account, we love our neareſt brethren, for the ſame reaſon we ſhall love all, who exhibit the ſame character. The good Chriſtian deſires the prevalence of religion every where: he would rejoice that all men were virtuous

and happy. He will not, therefore, purſue the religious intereſt of his own community, family or perſon, in ways prejudicial to the general intereſt of religion. He will not conſult merely his own edification, or that of thoſe with whom he is immediately connected; but will ſeek the profit of many, that they may be ſaved.

This love of the brethren leads to a more general love of the human race. Chriſtians are required 'to add to their brotherly kindneſs charity;' 'to increaſe and abound in their love one toward another, and toward all men.'

One who loves the brethren, becauſe they have the temper and obey the laws of Chriſt, muſt be ſuppoſed himſelf to have the ſame temper, and to obey the ſame laws. Chriſt exemplified, and has enjoined a univerſal philanthropy. He did good to enemies, as well as friends; he prayed for his crucifiers, as well as for his diſciples: and he has enjoined on us the ſame extenſive benevolence.

Whatever pretenſions we make to Chriſtian fellowſhip, if our love is confined to any particular community, or even to Chriſtian profeſſors, and does not, in ſuitable expreſſions of meekneſs, goodneſs and moderation, extend itſelf to others; it is not that love of the brethren which Chriſt enjoins; for where is brotherly kindneſs, there will be charity. The brotherly love, which Chriſt has taught, will make us meek and gentle toward all men. It will tame and ſoften the paſſions, correct and ſweeten the temper, and diſpoſe us to ſhew kindneſs to all men, whether they be Chriſtians or heathens, good men or ſinners.

4. As members of the church of God, we are called to an exemplary holineſs.

CHRIST gave himſelf for the church, that he might ſanctify it, and finally preſent it glorious. We are called to be ſaints; ſeparated from the world, that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; placed under goſpel light, that we may be the children of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, ſhining among them as lights in the world. The honor of religion, and our own profeſſion, oblige us to walk circumſpectly among men. Thoſe, whom the apoſtles admitted to their fellowſhip, were exhorted to keep themſelves from an untoward generation. The looſe and unguarded converſation of Chriſtian profeſſors, gives occaſion to others to ſpeak reproachfully of religion itſelf. They are, therefore, to walk in wiſdom toward them who are without; to provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men, that the enemies of truth may be put to ſilence, having no evil thing to ſay of them.

5. LET us exerciſe a mutual watchfulneſs in our Chriſtian relation.

WE are called into this relation, that we may by love ſerve one another, and be fellow workers to the kingdom of God. Let us be ready to receive, as well as to give, counſel and reproof, as there is occaſion; and in this imperfect ſtate occaſions will be frequent. Much allowance is indeed to be made for human weakneſs, for miſapprehenſion, and for wrong report. We expect ſuch allowance from our brethren, and they are intitled to it from us. Too great forwardneſs to remark, and too haſty a zeal to reprove every trivial fault, and every unguarded action in our

brethren, will tend rather to vex, than reform them; rather to hurt our influence, than to mend their tempers. Reproof is a delicate matter. It is not to be omitted, when occaſion calls for it; but it ſhould be given with tenderneſs and prudence, that it may be received with meekneſs and gratitude.

6. Our ſubject reminds us of the duty which we owe to our youth.

If the children of profeſſing Chriſtians are within God's viſible church, they are entitled to our particular notice and regard. Though it ſhould be conceded, that baptiſm denominates them members of the catholic church only, and they become not members of any local church, till, by their own act, they join themſelves to it, yet there is a duty which that church peculiarly owes to them, in which they were publicly given up to God, of which their parents are members, and under the immediate inſpection of which they live and act. If they are members of the church at large, thoſe Chriſtians, among whom providence places them, and who are witneſſes of their conduct, are eſpecially bound to watch over them.

We ought then to admoniſh and reprove them, whenever we ſee them behave in a manner unſuitable to the relation, which they bear to Chriſt; to rebuke their levity, impiety and profaneneſs, that we may reſtrain them from making themſelves vile; to put them in remembrance of the ſacred obligations, which they are under; and call their attention to that ſolemn day, when every work will be brought into judgment.

While they are under the immediate government of parents or others, it becomes us, in the moſt tender and friendly manner to give thoſe, who have the

care of them, information of their misbehaviour, when it is gross and repeated, and appears to proceed from a perverse disposition. If Christians would thus assist each other in the government of their families, at the same time exhibiting an example worthy of their character, much service might be done to the rising generation, and to the general interest of religion.

When youth have arrived to competent age, it would be proper that the church, as a body, should deal with them for open immoralities, obstinately persisted in against more private admonitions; unless they disavow their relation to the church, and her authority over them. In this case she may, in a formal manner cut them off from among their people, and declare them no longer under her care.

7. Our subject deserves the serious attention of the youth.

My children; God, in his good providence, has ordered the place of your birth and education, under the light of the gospel, within his church, and in Christian families. The most of you have been solemnly dedicated to God in baptism, and have received the visible seal of his covenant. See then, that you walk worthy of the privileges to which you are born, and of the character which you bear, as God's children, set apart to be his. Receive, with filial reverence and obedience, the instructions and counsels of your parents, who have bound themselves to God for your virtuous behaviour. Attend on the appointed means of religious knowledge, converse with the holy scriptures and other instructive books, seriously regard the stated services of the sanctuary, and endeavour in the use of these advantages, to become wise to salvation, and

to furnish yourselves unto every good work. As you have been consecrated to God, live to him. *Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.* Let your hearts be impressed with a sense of your sinful and helpless condition; look to Jesus as the only Saviour of a lost and guilty world: go to God in his name, and humbly implore the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit. Make an actual dedication of yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, deliberately resolving on a course of pure religion, and let all your conversation be as becomes the gospel. Keep up a daily correspondence with God in secret. Think and speak of him with reverence, detesting and avoiding every species of profanity. Cease to hear the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Entertain no licentious opinions, such as would encourage vice or pacify the conscience under guilt. Say to evil doers, depart from us, for we will keep the commandments of our God. Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And rest not till you have actually taken the covenant bonds on yourselves, by a public profession of religion, and have come up to all gospel ordinances. Do not this rashly and thoughtlessly, but humbly and seriously, in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. Think not that you have a right to live at large. You are bound to confess Christ's name before men, and to submit to the government of his church. It was foretold by the prophet, that, when God should pour out his spirit on the offspring of his people, one would say, I am the Lord's, and another would subscribe with his hand to the Lord. Thus the church would increase

by the acceſſion of the young; her ſons would come from far, and her daughters be nurſed at her ſide. You cannot be ſaid to have fulfilled the obligations of your baptiſm, ſo long as you live in a careleſs neglect of any of the ordinances of Chriſt. There is reaſon to believe, that, in the inſtitution of the ſupper, Chriſt had a primary regard to the young, who were always the objects of his particular attention. This ordinance was inſtituted immediately after the celebration of the paſſover, which was a figure of the ſuffering Saviour. In alluſion to that feſtival, Chriſt is called our paſſover, ſacrificed for us. And in alluſion to the manner in which the paſſover was, eaten, we are required *to keep the feast* of the holy ſupper, *not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Now the ſpecial reaſon aſſigned for the paſſover was, that *when children in time to come should inquire, what mean ye by this service?* The parent might thence take occaſion to inſtruct them *how the Lord saved his people from Egypt.* Accordingly the youth were to attend on the paſſover, in the appointed place, as ſoon as they were able to *bring an offering in their hand.* Now if the ſupper ſucceeds in the place of the paſſover, was not this one intention of it, that the young, on ſeeing this ſervice, might be led to inquire, what was meant by it, and thus open the way for inſtruction in the glorious redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. Come then, my children, attend a feſtival appointed for *you.* Here behold what your affectionate Saviour has done and ſuffered for ſuch loſt and helpleſs creatures as *you.* Behold, admire and love; ſmite your breaſts and return with new ſentiments of the evil of your ſins, and new reſolutions of future obedience. Remember

that all ordinances, and this in particular, were inſtituted as means of promoting a holy life; and *let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

8. THE invitation given to the young ſhall now be addreſſed to others. Come, join yourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which ſhall not be forgotten.

THE Son of GOD has come down from Heaven, and has purchaſed a church with his own blood. Here he offers that ſalvation which guilty mortals need. He preſcribes the terms on which it may become yours. He has appointed ordinances, in the uſe of which you may be made meet for the enjoyment of it in Heaven. He has particularly inſtituted the ordinance of the ſupper, to remind you of his dying love, and the rich bleſſings purchaſed by his blood. He has required your attendance, to awaken your remembrance of him, warm your love to him, and ſtrengthen your faith in him.

HAVE you any ſenſe of your guilt and unworthineſs, and of his wonderful goodneſs and love? Any deſire to become conformed to his image, attempered to his goſpel, and entitled to his ſalvation? Any gratitude to your Divine Benefactor for all the great things which he has done and ſuffered for you? Any purpoſe of heart to honor and obey your glorious Redeemer and Lord? Any concern to promote peace and unity among his diſciples, to excite and encourage them to love and good works, and to advance the general intereſt of his kingdom? Then come and confeſs his name, declare your regard to his religion, ſubſcribe with your own hand, to him, attend on the ordinances of his houſe, walk in fellowſhip

with his profeſſed diſciples, join your influence to promote his cauſe, and ſhew by your holy converſation, that you really believe, and heartily love the religion which you profeſs.

To conclude, let us all unite our endeavours to make Chriſt's church glorious. Let us as workers together with Chriſt, and with one another, contribute in our reſpective places, and according to our ſeveral abilities, to edify and enlarge it. Let us not content ourſelves with appearing as members of the viſible church here below; but be concerned to become real members of the inviſible church above, that when the time of our departure is come, we may go to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, to an innumerable company of angels, the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, whoſe names are enrolled in Heaven.

THE END.